Newsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh
New Series Volume 14 Number 4 April 2017

FIELD OUTING: Sunday, 23rd April 2017, 6.00AM: Kasu Brahmananda Reddy (KBR) National Park, Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad.

Spread over 400 acres, this park was originally the Chiran Palace grounds. Easily accessible due to its location in the heart of the city, the KBR Park is a haven for Partridges and Peafowl, and one can expect to see some scrubland birds as well. The lake in the park, and its surrounds, can also throw up some interesting water birds.

This will be a half-day trip. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Ms Surekha Aitabathula (99490-38532).

INDOOR MEETING: LIFE OF BIRDS Episode-4: Meat Eaters
Thursday, 20th April 2017, 6.00PM: Hamburg Hall, Goethe-zentrum Hyderabad, 20 Journalist's Colony, Road No. 3, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500 034. (For directions, please contact 94905-09251 or 040-65526443/23350040)

From the meat-eating Kia Parrot of New Zealand, to African eagles that prey on monkeys and flamingos, see the strategies that some birds use to find and catch their prey, including tracking by ultraviolet vision!

Report: Bird Race, 19th February 2017

Srikanth Bhamidipati

Brown Fish Owl (Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

On February 19th 2017, birders and photographers from the City of Pearls gathered to race and search for birds across the city, as part of the event which is popularly known as the HSBC Bird Race. All the participants gathered early in the morning at Tourism Plaza, Begumpet and made strategies for winning the race.

Registrations done and breakfast hampers collected, all the participants were now eager to leave the starting point and record some birds. After a few photographs and flag off by the chief guest, Dr Christina Z. Chongthu IAS, Managing Director, Telangana State Tourism Development Corporation, 18 teams left in different directions in search of birds.

Rosy Starling (Photo: Yella Prakash Rao)

The Bird Race is a wonderful event as it brings people of different age groups together on the same platform and allows them to compete with each other. This year the youngest to participate in the race were two 6-year-old girls, Sanjeevani I and Joshita, who added spice to their teams with their interest in this field.

Orange-headed Thrush (Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

Black Drongo with (probable) Barn Swallow kill
(Photo: Yella Prakash Rao)

As the day progressed, the teams had a lovely time documenting their findings while also keeping an eye on the time, as they had to get back to the venue by 6:00PM. Even on returning after a long day, the enthusiasm was still the same, as all the teams discussed their sightings, but none willing to let out their total tally – it reminded me of my school days! The Judges JVD Moorty, Gubbala Ramakrishna Rao and Humayun Taher vetted all the sightings submitted by the teams, and occasionally called the team members to provide proof for certain sightings. Finally, the judges completed the screening and came to a decision. All present were served refreshments and geared up for the evening event and the results.

The panel (Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

The chief guest for the evening event was Mr. Mahesh Iyer, Head of Oncology Biometrics for Novartis, and the Guest of Honour was Mr. Sam Alex, Vice President and Branch Head, HSBC Hyderabad. Along with Mr. Mahesh and Sam on the dais there were also our very own JVD Moorty, Hon. Vice President of BSAP, Shafaat Ulla, Hon. Secretary of BSAP and Diyanat Ali, Founder of GHAC, along with Sagarika Melkote, who was compering. Many participants shared their experiences, but there were 2 things which people were eagerly waiting for – the Results, and the FOODDDDDD!!!!!!

A section of the audience (Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

Team Hawks (Srikanth B, Ambika Pradhan, Sathvik Reddy, Keerthi Basa) placed first with 161 species, followed by **Team Eagles** (Sanjeevani I (6 yrs), Anita Negi, Kannaki I, Lawrence M) with 146 and **Team Snipes** (Sudipta, Anjali, Jayathi, Vikramjit Wasu) with 124 species.

Short-eared Owl (Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

Tickell's Thrush (juvenile)
(Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

By conducting these types of events we can gather information on bird life in and around Hyderabad and help the Forest Department and other organizations in conserving and preserving the habitat. In this year's Bird Race, species like Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*), Spangled Drongo (*Dicrurus hottentottus*), first winter Ultramarine Flycatcher (*Ficedula superciliaris*), Brown Rock Chat (*Cercomela fusca*) and other key species were found. The total number of teams that participated was 18, with 70 members, and the total number of species spotted was 203.

Ultramarine Flycatcher (first winter)
(Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

Below is the list of birds spotted at various locations on the day:

Sl #	Common Name	Sl #	Common Name	Sl #	Common Name
1	Avadavat, Red	16	Coot, Eurasian	31	Dove, Eurasian Collared
2	Babbler, Jungle	17	Cormorant, Great	32	Dove, Laughing
3	Babbler, Large Grey	18	Cormorant, Indian	33	Dove, Red-collared
4	Babbler, Tawny-bellied	19	Cormorant, Little	34	Dove, Rock
5	Babbler, Yellow-billed	20	Coucal, Southern	35	Dove, Spotted
6	Babbler, Yellow-eyed	21	Courser, Indian	36	Drongo, Ashy
7	Barbet, Coppersmith	22	Crow, House	37	Drongo, Black
8	Bee-eater, Blue-tailed	23	Crow, Large-billed	38	Drongo, White-bellied
9	Bee-eater, Green	24	Cuckoo, Common Hawk	39	Duck, Spot-billed
10	Bulbul, Red-vented	25	Cuckoo, Grey-bellied	40	Duck, Tufted
11	Bulbul, White-browed	26	Cuckoo, Indian	41	Eagle, Bonelli's
12	Bushchat, Pied	27	Cuckoo, Jacobin / Pied	42	Eagle, Booted
13	Buzzard, Oriental Honey	28	Cuckoo-shrike, Black-headed	43	Eagle, Changeable Hawk
14	Buzzard, White-eyed	29	Cuckoo-shrike, Large	44	Eagle, Crested Serpent
15	Cisticola, Zitting	30	Darter, Oriental	45	Eagle, Short-toed Snake

Sl #	Common Name	Sl #	Common Name	Sl #	Common Name
46	Egret, Eastern Cattle	99	Malkoha, Blue-faced	152	Starling, Brahminy
47	Egret, Great	100	Martin, Dusky Crag	153	Starling, Chestnut-tailed
48	Egret, Intermediate	101	Minivet, Small	154	Starling, Rosy
49	Egret, Little	102	Moorhen, Common	155	Stilt, Black-winged
50	Fantail, White-browed	103	Munia, Scaly-breasted	156	Stint, Little
51	Fantail, White-throated	104	Munia, Tricoloured	157	Stonechat, Common
52	Flowerpecker, Pale-billed	105	Myna, Common	158	Stork, Painted
53	Flowerpecker, Thick-billed	106	Nightjar, Jungle	159	Sunbird, Purple
54	Flycatcher, Asian Brown	107	Openbill, Asian	160	Sunbird, Purple-rumped
55	Paradise-flycatcher, Asian	108	Oriole, Indian Golden	161	Swallow, Barn
56	Flycatcher, Red-breasted	109	Osprey	162	Swallow, Red-rumped
57	Flycatcher, Tickell's Blue	110	Parakeet, Plum-headed	163	Swallow, Streak-throated
58	Flycatcher, Verditer	111	Parakeet, Rose-ringed	164	Swallow, Wire-tailed
59	Francolin, Grey	112	Peafowl	165	Swamphen, Purple
60	Gadwall	113	Petronia, Chestnut-shouldered	166	Swift, Asian Palm
61	Garganey	114	Pigeon, Yellow-footed Green	167	Swift, Little
62	Godwit, Black-tailed	115	Pintail, Northern	168	Tailorbird, Common
63	Goose, Bar-headed	116	Pipit, Olive-backed	169	Teal, Common
64	Goose, Cotton Pygmy	117	Pipit, Paddyfield	170	Whistling-duck, Lesser
65	Duck, Knob-billed	118	Pipit, Richard's	171	Tern, Little
66	Grebe, Little	119	Pipit, Tawny	172	Tern, River
67	Greenshank, Common	120	Pipit, Tree	173	Tern, Whiskered
68	Gull, Black-headed	121	Plover, Kentish	174	Thrush, Blue Rock
69	Gull, Brown-headed	122	Plover, Little Ringed	175	Thrush, Blue-capped Rock
70	Harrier, Marsh	123	Pochard, Common	176	Tit, Cinereous
71	Heron, Grey	124	Pochard, Red-crested	177	Treepie, Rufous
72	Heron, Indian Pond	125	Pratincole, Small	178	Wagtail, Grey
73	Heron, Purple	126	Prinia, Ashy	179	Wagtail, White
74	Hoopoe, Eurasian	127	Prinia, Grey-breasted	180	Wagtail, White-browed
75	Hornbill, Indian Grey	128	Prinia, Jungle	181	Wagtail, Yellow
76	Ibis, Black-headed	129	Prinia, Plain	182	Warbler, Blyth's Reed
77	Ibis, Glossy	130	Quail, Jungle Bush	183	Warbler, Booted
78	Ibis, Red-naped	131	Redshank	184	Warbler, Greenish
79	Iora, Common	132	Redshank, Spotted	185	Waterhen, White-breasted
80	Jacana, Bronze-winged	133	Robin, Indian	186	Weaver, Baya
81	Jacana, Pheasant-tailed	134	Robin, Oriental Magpie	187	White-eye, Oriental
82	Kestrel, Eurasian	135	Roller, Indian	188	Whitethroat, Lesser
83	Kingfisher, Common	136	Ruff	189	Woodpecker, Brown-capped Pygmy
84	Kingfisher, Pied	137	Sandpiper, Common	190	Flameback, Black-rumped
85	Kingfisher, White-throated	138	Sandpiper, Green	191	Woodswallow, Ashy
86	Kite, Black	139	Sandpiper, Marsh	192	Warbler, Western Crowned
87	Kite, Black-shouldered	140	Sandpiper, Wood	193	Drongo, Hair-crested
88	Kite, Brahminy	141	Shelduck, Ruddy	194	Treeswift, Crested
89	Koel, Asian	142	Shikra	195	Warbler, Clamorous Reed
90	Lapwing, Red-wattled	143	Shoveler, Northern	196	Chat, Brown Rock
91	Lapwing, Yellow-wattled	144	Shrike, Bay-backed	197	Thrush, Orange-headed
92	Lark, Ashy-crowned Sparrow	145	Shrike, Brown	198	Warbler, Sulphur-bellied
93	Lark, Jerdon's Bush	146	Shrike, Long-tailed	199	Black-naped Monarch
94	Bushlark, Red-winged	147	Silverbill, Indian	200	Flycatcher, Grey-headed Canary
95	Lark, Rufous-tailed	148	Snipe, Common	201	Flycatcher, Ultramarine
96	Lark, Singing Bush	149	Snipe, Pintail	202	Oriole, Black-hooded
97	Lark, Sykes's	150	Sparrow, House	203	Thrush, Malabar Whistling
98	Leafbird, Golden-fronted	151	Starling, Asian Pied		

Wood Sandpiper (Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

Chestnut-tailed Starling (Photo: Yella Prakash Rao)

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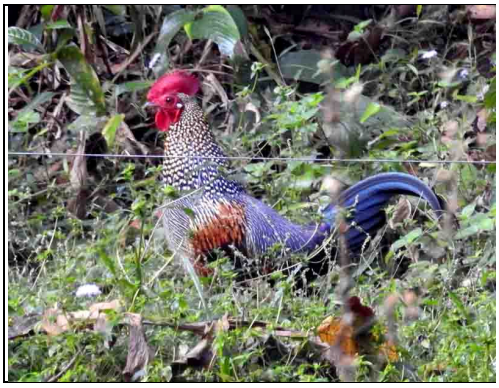
Trip Report: Urulanthanni and Edamalayar Forests of Kerala

Text and photos: Sita Susarla

A view of Urulanthanni Forest

On a visit to Kerala we took a day off to visit the Urulanthanni rainforest and the tropical evergreen forest of Edamalayar which are situated close to Thattekad.

Though our plan was to visit Thattekad, the guide suggested these forests as they reported very high birding activity. We too did not mind as our aim was to have a nice birding experience.



Grey Junglefowl

We started off early in the morning from Kothamangalam and by 7:00AM the guide took us to Urulanthanni Forest. It being the first week of February, peak birding time, we were able to see many bird species. The forest was, in fact, teeming with birds.

The forest vegetation included Cheeni trees, Bhadraksha trees, Vellapine or White Pine, Teak trees and Bamboo bushes. Most of these trees were 40-60ft tall and the birds were perched on them.

Malabar Barbet

White-bellied Blue Flycatcher

We saw Malabar Barbets (*Megalaima malabarica*), Flame-throated Bulbuls (*Pycnonotus (melanicterus) gularis*), an Asian Fairy Bluebird (*Irena puella*) and some Grey-fronted Green Pigeons (*Treron (pompadora) affinis*). The photos had to be shot with the head held tilted back on the neck most of the time. Some relief was provided by a White-bellied Flycatcher (*Cyornis pallipes*), Blue-capped Rock Thrush (*Monticola cinclorhynchus*) and an Orange-headed Thrush (*Zoothera citrina*), all perched closer to the ground.

Malabar Grey Hornbill

The Malabar Grey Hornbills (*Ocyceros griseus*) and Greater Racket-tailed Drongos (*Dicrurus paradiseus*) were everywhere and we watched them to our heart's content. There was a Velvet-fronted Nuthatch (*Citta frontalis*) climbing down the bark of a tree, which is typical of nuthatches.

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch

Little Spiderhunter

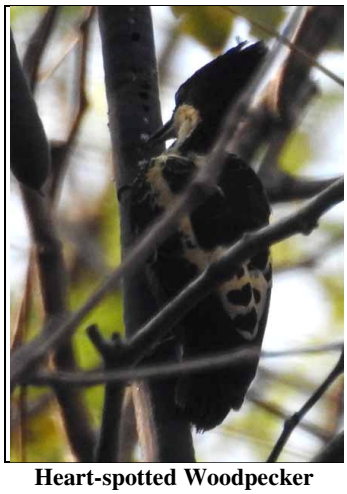
Soon the guide recognized the characteristic *tzeck tzeck* call of the Little Spiderhunter (*Arachnothera longirostra*). We followed the call and came upon two of them. Generally found in Montane (mountain) ecosystems, the Spiderhunter feeds on nectar of flowers. It builds nests out of spider cobwebs and, therefore, probably the name.

Our next sighting was the Crested Goshawk (*Accipiter trivirgatus*) which is very rare to find. It was seen resting under the canopy of broad leaves and we could take many pictures. However we were not as lucky with the Malabar Trogon (*Harpactes fasciatus*) and only had a fleeting glance of the bird before it disappeared into the thick foliage.

Crested Goshawk

Sri Lanka Frogmouth

The guide then took us on a 10-minute trail to see the Sri Lanka Frogmouth (*Batrachostomus moniliger*). Undisturbed by our presence, the bird remained very calm and composed, allowing us to take some very good pictures. Another interesting point was that, while trekking through the forest, at several places we saw evidence of the presence of elephants, through their droppings and footmarks.



Heart-spotted Woodpecker

Lesser Yellownape

After a quick lunch and some rest we set out to Edamalayar Forests at 3:00PM. These evergreen forests are located at a distance of 20km from Thattekkad Sanctuary. We decided to cover a stretch by foot. Very soon we knew we were doing the right thing. The Heart-spotted Woodpecker (*Hemicircus canente*), Lesser Yellownape (*Picus chlorolopus*) and White-bellied Treepies (*Dendrocitta leucogastra*) were the highlight here.

Sitting on the topmost part of a teak tree, the Yellownape was calling for nearly 15 minutes with very short breaks while the Heart-spotted Woodpeckers, four of them, were busy feeding on the bark of a 60ft tree. Here I have to acknowledge my Nikon P600 Camera – but for its 2000mm zoom, I would not have got clear pictures of these woodpeckers. We also got to see the Legge's Hawk Eagle, though not for long.

White-bellied Treepie

On our way back to Kothamangalam the guide took us to Chelad to show us Pin-tailed Snipes (*Gallinago stenura*). We saw five of them resting in a field about 10ft below us. They didn't fly away as most snipes do and so we could watch them till sunset. There were also many White-cheeked Barbets perched on cable lines.

Bronzed Drongo

Malabar Parakeet

Though it was only a one day birding trip, we were thoroughly satisfied as we could see some of the beautiful birds of Kerala. We decided to visit again for a longer duration to see more of them soon.

Below is the list of birds spotted at various locations on the day:

Sl #	Common Name	Sl #	Common Name	Sl #	Common Name
1	Lesser Whistling-Duck	33	Asian Koel	65	Cinereous Tit
2	Indian Spot-billed Duck	34	Banded Bay Cuckoo	66	Velvet-fronted Nuthatch
3	Indian Peafowl	35	Common Hawk cuckoo	67	Flame-throated Bulbul
4	Grey Junglefowl	36	Srilankan Frogmouth	68	Red-vented Bulbul
5	Little Grebe	37	Indian Swiftlet	69	Red-whiskered Bulbul
6	Asian Openbill	38	Malabar Trogon	70	White-browed Bulbul
7	Little Cormorant	39	Malabar Grey Hornbill	71	Yellow-browed Bulbul
8	Great Cormorant	40	White-breasted Kingfisher	72	Blyth's Reed Warbler
9	Indian Cormorant	41	Pied Kingfisher	73	Ashy Prinia
10	Oriental Darter	42	Green Bee-eater	74	Indian Scimitar Babbler
11	Grey Heron	43	Malabar Barbet	75	Puff-throated Babbler
12	Great Egret	44	White-cheeked Barbet	76	Jungle Babbler
13	Intermediate Egret	45	Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker	77	Asian Fairy Bluebird
14	Cattle Egret	46	Lesser Yellonape	78	Brown-breasted Flycatcher
15	Indian Pond Heron	47	Black-rumped Flameback	79	Indian Robin
16	Black-shouldered Kite	48	Greater Flameback	80	White-bellied Blue Flycatcher
17	Black Eagle	49	Heart-spotted Woodpecker	81	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher
18	Crested Goshawk	50	Plum-headed Parakeet	82	Blue-capped Rock Thrush
19	Shikra	51	Malabar Parakeet	83	Orange-headed Thrush
20	Black Kite	52	Common Woodshrike	84	Indian Blackbird
21	White-breasted Waterhen	53	Common Iora	85	Rosy Starling
22	Grey-headed Swamphen	54	Small Minivet	86	Brahminy Starling
23	Red-wattled Lapwing	55	Orange Minivet	87	Malabar Starling
24	Pin-tailed Snipe	56	Indian Golden Oriole	88	Common Myna
25	Green Sandpiper	57	Black-naped Oriole	89	Pale-billed Flowerpecker
26	Whiskered Tern	58	Black Drongo	90	Purple-rumped Sunbird
27	River Tern	59	Ashy Drongo	91	Crimson-backed Sunbird
28	Rock Pigeon	60	Bronzed Drongo	92	Purple Sunbird
29	Spotted Dove	61	Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	93	Little Spiderhunter
30	Asian Emerald Dove	62	Indian Paradise-flycatcher	94	White-browed Wagtail
31	Grey-fronted Green Pigeon	63	White-bellied Treepie	95	House Sparrow
32	Southern Coucal	64	House Crow	96	Scaly-breasted Munia

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BUS BIRDING
Trip Report: ICRISAT, February 2017

Text and photos: Srikanth Bhamidipati

A scene at one of the lakes in ICRISAT

BSAP had organized a trip to ICRISAT campus in February. It has always been a great place for birding, owing to the great vegetation cover and the undisturbed habitat. Expectations were high for the day.

Eurasian Marsh Harrier

As we boarded the bus, we spotted a couple of Eurasian Marsh Harriers (*Circus aeruginosus*) and Eurasian Spoonbills (*Platalea leucorodia*). This seemed like a good start and we proceeded to the first lake. Here we spotted a few Lesser Whistling-ducks (*Dendrocygna javanica*) and Indian Spot-billed Ducks (*Anas poecilorhyncha*) which seemed restless due to our unexpected arrival…looks like ICRISAT forgot to give them a memo warning of our arrival!

Common Greenshank and Common Redshank

Walking around the lake, we saw a few waders, warblers and other species which were flying around. After clicking a few images and birding for a while we proceeded towards the next lake – Surisehgal Lake.

This lake was filled with the regulars – Eurasian Coots (*Fulica atra*), Indian Spot-billed Ducks, Cotton Pygmy-goose (*Nettapus coromandelianus*), Darters (*Anhinga melanogaster*), Herons and other common species. Here we also sighted a few River Terns (*Sterna aurantia*). It was interesting to see that every bird that flew past had a fish in its mouth. It looked like they were having a barbecue party where every guest was asked to bring their own fish!

Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark

Later we proceeded towards another lake where the first thing we did was to open up our breakfast boxes. It was more like a pot luck scene, so everyone picked up what they like and filled their tummies.

Ruddy Shelduck

Indian Courser

Now it was time to again get back to some serious birding, so we set up our scopes and started counting and checking all the birds across the lake and on the small islands. There were about 5 Bar-headed Geese (*Anser indicus*) and a number of Ruddy Shelducks (*Tadorna ferruginea*).

Another group went to the other side of the bund and they discovered more birds there. We immediately went and found a flock of 40 Bar-headed Geese, about 70 Terns and many waders and ducks. This place was like heaven for birdwatchers! Finally after taking some good pictures and compiling a long list we proceeded to the final lake.

There were a lot of Herons, Ibis, Egrets and Cormorants. After carefully identifying them and taking some photographs, I turned to the opposite side to see a few waders sitting at a distance. One of them was a Pacific Golden Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*) which was an interesting record for that location. A fellow birder spotted 24 Yellow Wagtails (*Motacilla flava*).

Along with these there were other common woodland species, but the best sighting for me that day was the Indian Courser (*Cursorius coromandelicus*) which was spotted just close to the gate on our exit. There was a pair, and their behavior was interesting. It looked like they were protecting something important – probably a nest. After watching them for a while, we all left after a wonderful day of birding.

Ruff

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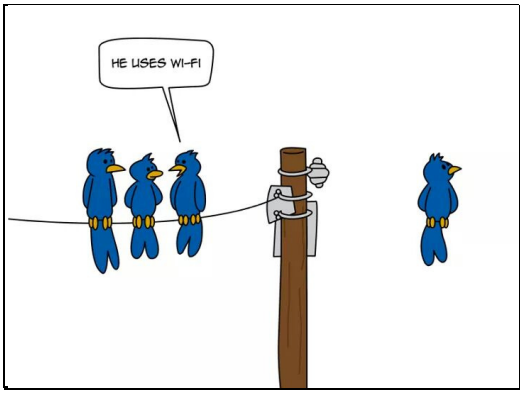
Bird Humour

Contributed by: Bharadwaj Korni



Bird of the Month

Text & photo: Umesh Mani

Rusty-tailed Flycatcher (*Ficedula ruficauda*)

Rusty-tailed Flycatcher (Sattal, Uttarakhand, 19-04-2015)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Muscicapidae
Genus: *Ficedula*
Species: *F. ruficauda*
Size: 14 cm

Description & distribution: The Rusty-tailed Flycatcher is a small, seasonally migratory passerine in the family Muscicapidae (Old World chats and flycatchers) that breeds in central Asia and the western Himalayas. It is drab brown, and its rufous uppertail coverts and tail give it a female Redstart-like appearance. Structurally, it can be confused with the Asian Brown Flycatcher, and the differentiating features are a larger size, flatter forehead, and sometimes, slightly raised crown feathers, that may give an impression of a crest. It has (sometimes) a faint supercilium, a noticeable pale eye-ring (though less distinct than the Asian Brown), a grey-brown throat and breast, and a white belly. The lower mandible is entirely orange (unlike the Asian Brown, where it is only partly orange). The sexes are alike, but the juvenile has buff spotting on upperparts and dark scaling on underparts.

The Rusty-tailed Flycatcher breeds in mixed coniferous-broadleaved forests in the Western Himalayas, from Pakistan across to central Nepal, between the altitudes of 2100m and 3600m, and winters in evergreen broadleaved forests mostly in South-western India from the North Kanara region to Kerala. However, there have been occasional records from Rajasthan, Kutch as well as the Eastern Ghats, where presumably it is a passage migrant.

Habitat & behaviour: The Rusty-tailed Flycatcher is a solitary bird, and frequents the edge of forests, generally keeping to the canopy of large trees, though it may venture lower while hunting for flies and other insects, which are its main prey. Its call consists of three or four rapidly-repeated loud, clear notes; a bullfinch-like *peu peu*; or a short, deep *churr*. The song is a drawn-out, rising and falling mournful whistle, followed by some rapid warbling.

Nesting: The Rusty-tailed Flycatcher breeds mainly between May and July. Its nest is a solid cup made of moss, coated with lichen and cobwebs, located on bushes or horizontal forks in trees. The usual clutch consists of 3-4 pale sea-green eggs with reddish freckles.

Local name: The Rusty-tailed Flycatcher is known as *'lalpunchh makhimar'* or *'badamipunchh makhimar'* in Hindi and '*chempuvalanpakshi*' in Malayalam.

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For Private Circulation Only
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For information, write to: Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh, PO Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500034. **E-group:** http://groups.google.co.in/group/bsap_online. **Website:** www.bsap.in. **Society membership** (in Rs.): Annual: 500 per annum; Student: 200 per annum; Corporate: 2000 per annum; Life: 3000. (*Add Rs 75 for outstation cheques.)*